In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind



**November 26, 2016** 

## The Unending Suffering of Afghan Women

fghan women have been highly vulnerable to individual and collective violence. The patriarchal system, parochial mindsets and cultural restrictions took their toll on them. The social and political barriers hampered their progress and denied their significant role in the community. The stereotypical phrases, which root in degrading view about women, humiliated women and underestimated their role to a great extent. Women are still the "prison of the veil" and confined within the four walls. Afghan women suffer not only from domestic violence but also from terrorism. The Taliban fighters, who nurture a radical ideology, target women in public places. In other words, since women are treated as an inferior creature on the basis of their sex in the Taliban's radical view, their freedom is curtailed and their rights are violated in the worst possible way. In suicide bombings and terrorist attacks, the gory scene, as streams of women's blood ooze from riddled bodies, fills one with a strong sense of fear and hatred. In a nutshell, women fall victim to cultural traditions, patriarchal system, parochial mindsets, and social and political ills. Gender discrimination still prevails in tribal belts, where women are flagellated or stoned to death in desert courts, mainly in case of eloping with the men of their choice. In tribal areas, a girl is not given an iota of chance for deciding about her life or choosing her life-partner rather she is supposed to live the entire life with the man chosen by her family, under the same roof, without breathing a word! It is believed that tribal councils are of the same view as the Taliban: women are created to satiate men's carnal desire and be entirely subject to their husbands.

Despite the fact that discrimination against women is condemned in the Constitution of Afghanistan and men and women are entitled equally, the graph of violence against women are, reportedly, high. Speaking at a ceremony in Kabul to mark 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women, which started on Friday, Afghan President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani said that violence against women was a serious challenge in Afghanistan which roots in "misogynistic culture in the country". The bloody picture of Farkhunda, a 27-year-old woman who was lynched by a group of angry men, still haunts Afghan women. Simply accused with a talisman-writer, she was punished to death and the incident went viral in national and international media. Her sad death symbolizes how Afghan women are left at the mercy of "misogynistic culture" and treated as a pariah. In a radical attitude, women's rights are tailored by personal taste and then colored with a religious brush. In other words, religious extremists impose their own ideas on religion regarding women's rights and then practice upon their self-styled methods. Their interpretations are sheer stereotype. The Taliban and members of the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) treat women out of bias, carnal desire and ignorance and their ill-mannered treatment has nothing to do with religion. Although the post-Taliban Afghanistan approved a new Constitution in 2004 and established a democratic administration, violence against women continues unabated. The emergence of warring parties narrows the opportunity of women to take more active part in social and political activities. The women casualties in suicide bombings demoralize them and curtail their liberty. In another item, the government is, constitutionally, committed to protect the rights and liberty of the nation, including women and men, and pave the ground for all individuals to play their role without fear. Furthermore, the government has promised to empower women and uphold their rights through conducting educational and cultural programs. Article 24 states, "Liberty and human dignity are inviolable. The state shall respect and protect liberty as well as human dignity." The dignity and natural rights of citizens are considered "inviolable" by law and will have to be respected by the state and nation. Radical feminists believe that women cannot get rid of sexual cruelties and atrocities by gradual changes and amendment. According to them, patriarchy is a systemic phenomenon; gender equality is possible only by demolishing the system of patriarchy. They believe that those social and cultural norms which reiterate the slender figures and sympathetic attitudes of women, aim to extend their inferiority and obedience. According to this type of feminism, objectifying women through media, models and advertisements change women to sexual objects with the intention of amusing and pleasing men. Indeed, men and women should have been given equal chance and opportunity in social, cultural and political activities. The government must implement law in every nook and cranny of the country so as to prevent from desert courts being conducted by tribal council in villages. Based on a legal principle, "No deed shall be considered a crime unless ruled by a law promulgated prior to commitment of the offense." However, the tribal councils, which punish women for eloping, practice against the law, since it is not considered a crime. So, it is believed that if the government implements the law across the country, the graph of violence against women will decrease on a large scale. Additionally, if the counter-insurgency gives the desired fruit, it will help women engage in social and political activities more confidently. The National Unity Government (NUG) is hoped to take high steps in empowering women and alleviating their pains and sufferings.



## **Unity in Diversity**

#### By Muhammad Zahir Akbari

fter each of several deadly attacks on Shia peaceful people in Kabul and Balkh province, there has no action taken place except the people are called not to forget the unity while themselves are responsible for most of disunities. Undoubtedly, unity is an undeniable and unique value by which one can overcome many challenges and also pave the way for a civilized nation but a question need to be raised if there is any real strategy or at least a national will to unite the people? Is it possible to gain unity without true platforms or and simply with piece of paternal advices? Isn't it ridiculous to call people for unity while applying racial policies in every aspect of social and economic arena?

We must note that unity is beyond words or paternal advice! It is not achieved unless we truly believe in it and know that there is a common Law that one should love his neighbor as himself. Promotion of this feeling is crucial to lead the nation or the world towards its progress, prosperity and sincere brotherhood. It is the only way that can increase trust, sympathy and collaboration against vices like corruption, discrimination and violence. It gives people sense of security so as to know each other better and understand each other's sensitivity. It can unite and promotes co-operation and opens opportunity to excellence. People residing in Afghanistan, somewhat, belong to different castes, religion and ethnic origins. This diversity of caste, colors, religions, languages and cultures is our own identity. They are like different flowers in a garden. The beauty of the garden lies in the varieties of its flowers and fragrance. This is the unique feature of Afghanistan. Whatever caste, creed, culture and customs we follow, we are all Afghani the beautiful flowers of the same garden. We should think that the progress of the country is our own progress, the pain of our neighbor our own pain and if somebody is victimized by act of terror tomorrow will be our turn. Thus, we should understand the concept of unity in diversity is the main basis to strengthen the feeling of unity among. According to national and international law, the first important principle of peaceful life is equity and equality regardless of their race, language, culture, color, religion and gender.

Unity in diversity can be defined as a concept of unity without uniformity and diversity without fragmentation that shifts focus from unity based on a mere tolerance of physical, cultural, linguistic, social, religious, political, ideological and/or psychological differences towards a more complex unity based on an understanding that difference enriches human interactions."Unity in diversity" is a popular motto within and among nation states, and also in political and social movements but the deep feeling of unity is not formed by motto or speeches it is beyond words and also concepts It must be truly believed, widely thought to school children and strongly be committed. In democratic system, election is a good opportunity to choose unifying leaders that is why we have to remember to vote for a leader who unites, not divides, a leader who can unite unities and promote diversity

The history of this idea dates back to ancient times in both Western and Eastern Old World cultures. The concept of unity in diversity was used "in non-Western cultures such as indigenous peoples in North America and Taoist societies in 400-500 B.C. In pre-modern Western culture it has beer implicit in the organic conceptions of the universe that have been manifest since the ancient Greek and Roman civiliza tions through medieval Europe and into the Romantic era As a long lasting human of human being it also certified by holy Quran Translation: there is no compulsion in religior because the right way has become clear from wrong way. So whoever disbelieves evil and believes in Allah, they grasped the firm degree of Allah that will never be broken. Allah is Hearing, Knowing. (Sorah Bakarah - verse 256)

Looking back in the past, we can also realize the importance of unity how this secret changed the destiny of United Nations. European Union, NATO are some of the examples. Ir African, When the Apartheid of Republic of South Africa celebrated 20 years of independence on May 31, 1981, the theme of the celebrations was "unity in diversity" as a cynical attempt to explain away the inequalities in South African life but Anti-apartheid campaigners opposed these celebrations and called on runners of the Comrades Marathor to protest at the co-option of the event by wearing a black armband. The winner of the race, Bruce Fordyce, was one of those wearing a black armband. This term has since beer incorporated into the preamble of the 1996 Constitution of South Africa as a central tenet of the new South Africa. In short, we should believe if there is no unity, no victory.

Therefore, the new generation should differentiate between general peaceful spirit of holy Quran and sinister hatred interpretations imposed by political criminals. We must ac cept unity in diversity as one of unbreakable principle in our social and political platforms. We must be aware that religious faithwa (decree) is only issued by credible addresse under certain terms and conditions. We have not witnessed any credible Islamic Jihad faithwa at least in recent 30 years while every day innocent children genocides under name of Islam. We should understand that we are as strong as we are united, as weak as we are divided!

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# Three Ways to Improve Child Health

### By Anita Zaidi

ver the last 15 years, the international community has made great strides in improving child health. But, with millions of children under the age of five dying each year from preventable and treatable diseases like diarrhea and pneumonia, the job is far from finished.

Most people would say that malaria or even HIV/AIDS are the leading child killers. In fact, diarrhea and pneumonia top the charts as the biggest threats to child survival - as they have for the more than 30 years that we have been tracking them. According to the recently published 2016 Pneumonia and Diarrhea Progress Report, the two diseases caused 1.4 million child deaths last year, and one-quarter of all deaths of children under the age of five. They exact their highest toll in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Tackling the two biggest killers of children worldwide may seem daunting, but we have all the knowledge we need to mount an effective response. Indeed, we know which viruses, bacteria, and parasites we need to target; which interventions are likely to work; and which countries need them the most. Just 15 countries account for 72% of childhood deaths from pneumonia and diarrhea. These are the countries on which the Pneumonia and Diarrhea Progress Report focuses. Its analysis of national efforts shows that, while most countries have made improvements over the last year, improvement in some of the largest countries has been minimal, and a few countries have not made any progress at all. Most deaths happen in the first two years of a child's life.

To change this, governments need to step up their efforts to prevent pneumonia and diarrhea, including by ensuring that parents have access to the information they need to protect their children. Here, it is critical that ordinary citizens stand up and hold their governments accountable.

The good news is that there are three relatively simple interventions that could make a big difference.

The first is breastfeeding. An age-old, no-cost intervention, breastfeeding exclusively for the first six months of a baby's life is one of the easiest ways to prevent both diarrhea and pneumonia. Breast milk has all the nutrients babies need to grow, as well as antibodies that boost their immune systems, thereby protecting against illness and helping to accelerate

The Progress Report estimates that about half of all diarrhea episodes, and about a third of respiratory infections, could be averted by breastfeeding. Yet rates of exclusive breastfeeding during a child's first six months remain low. In ten of the 15 countries evaluated in the Progress Report, fewer than half of mothers exclusively breastfeed their children.

To increase breastfeeding rates, governments need to ensure that mothers receive the guidance and help they need. That means training health workers; establishing community-level support networks, such as mother-to-mother groups; investing in behavioral-change campaigns; and creating a culture in which breastfeeding is welcome and encouraged.

The second critical intervention is improved water, sanitation, and hygiene in homes and communities. Globally, according to UNICEF, around 2.4 billion people still do not have access to modern sanitation, and 663 million do not have access to safe water sources. Many kids still lack clean drinking water, access to basic toilets, and good hygiene practices.

Poor water quality and lack of reliable sanitation systems to treat human waste play a big role in spreading diseases. UNI-CEF reports that something as simple as hand washing with soap can cut rates of diarrhea and respiratory infections by more than 40% and 25%, respectively.

By investing not only in systems to provide clean drinking water and sanitation, but also in educational programs that encourage better hygiene practices and toilet use, governments can break a vicious cycle of diarrhea and malnutrition that causes irreversible physical and cognitive damage. The children they help are more likely to be able to attend school, and grow into healthy, educated adults.

The third key intervention is vaccination. Vaccines represent the most cost-effective intervention for preventing childhood illness, and they already exist for most common bacterial causes of pneumonia (pneumococcus and Hib) and for the leading causes of diarrhea (rotavirus). Yet half of the world's children live in areas where the pneumococcal vaccine is not available through a national immunization program, and only 15% of the children in the world's poorest countries have access to the rotavirus vaccine. By making vaccines available through national immunization programs, governments can protect all children from the diseases that are most likely to harm or kill them. Efforts to ensure that families take advantage of vaccination services, including by educating parents about their value, will also be needed.

Pneumonia and diarrhea should not still be taking children's lives. No single intervention will be enough. But the accelerated and coordinated implementation of the three interventions described here could go a long way toward preventing pneumonia and diarrhea, especially for the most vulnerable children, enabling them to lead healthy, productive lives. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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